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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000131

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR JWOOD
OSD FOR SHIVERS
CG CJTF-82, POLAD, JICCENT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BAGHLAN GOVERNORSHIP LATEST VICTIM OF NOVEMBER BOMBING, PAKTYA GOVERNOR ANNOUNCED, MORE PLANNED

REF: A. 07 KABUL 4153

[B. 07 KABUL 4134](#)

Summary

¶1. (SBU) The government announced on January 9 the removal of Baghlan governor Mohammad Alam Ishaqzai, who had been suspended pending the results of the investigation into the November 6 Baghlan bombing, and his replacement with new-comer Abdul Jabar Haqbin. The government also confirmed publicly the appointment of Juma Khan Hamdard as governor of Paktya. The Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) is also planning a new appointment in Farah, and continues recruiting candidates for Helmand.

New Baghlan Governor, Fallout from Bombing Continues

¶2. (SBU) The government announced on January 9 the appointment of a new governor for Baghlan province, Abdul Jabar Haqbin, to replace Mohammad Alam Ishaqzai, who was suspended following the November 6 Baghlan bombing and remains under investigation (ref A). Haqbin is a Tajik from Nahrin District, Baghlan province. He graduated from the Economics Faculty of Kabul University and lived abroad under the Taliban. Upon his return, he was the head of a bank in northeastern Afghanistan. He then served for one year as head of the finance department in Baghlan province, then in the same job in Kunduz province. He is reportedly a member of Minister of Finance Ahady's Afghan Millat Party, of which Local Governance director Popal is the deputy.

¶3. (SBU) Independent Directorate for Local Governance deputy Barna Karimi told POLoff that President Karzai reluctantly replaced Ishaqzai in the face of continuing Parliamentary scrutiny of the Baghlan bombing. The IDLG presented Karzai with four candidates and Karzai chose Haqbin, a promising technocrat. Ishaqzai told POLoff following his dismissal that he remained under investigation and hoped to receive another government job once cleared by the investigation.

Controversial Appointee Hamdard Confirmed in Paktya

¶4. (SBU) The government also publically confirmed private reports of the appointment of Juma Khan Hamdard as governor of Paktya province, replacing Rahmatullah Rahmat (ref B). A Pashtun from Balkh province, Hamdard was a top Hezb-i Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) commander in the north who acted as the intermediary between Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Uzbek commander Abdul Rashid Dostum when the two were allied against the Soviets and later against the Taliban. Dostum appointed Hamdard commander of the 8th Corps upon Hamdard's return to Balkh after the fall of the Taliban. Hamdard cooperated with President Karzai on disarmament and was subsequently appointed governor of Baghlan, but he was expelled following Tajik protests of his attempts to distribute land to Pashtuns from other provinces. Karzai then appointed him governor of Jowzjan, where he followed Karzai's direction in marginalizing Dostum in his home province, again leading to his expulsion by Junbesh Party members loyal to Dostum.

¶5. (SBU) Hamdard is controversial among non-Pashtuns in the north. His candidacy for his third governorship was reportedly supported by other former HiG members in the Karzai administration, notably Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Senior Advisor Farook Wardak. He has less support from other presidential advisors, one of whom asserted the appointment to Paktya was a step to Hamdard's marginalization. In addition to his governorship, Hamdard is one of President Karzai's seven advisors on tribal issues, a role he shares with Helmand governor Wafa. Regardless of how long he remains governor of Paktya, he will to continue to enjoy a position close to the Palace.

More Changes Anticipated In Farah and Helmand

KABUL 00000131 002 OF 002

¶6. (SBU) IDLG deputy Karimi told POLOff that the IDLG also plans to replace Farah governor Mawlawi Mohideen Balouch in the next month. IDLG director Jelani Popal is courting two candidates to replace Helmand governor Asadullah Wafa, but Karimi said they both are demanding promises of considerable rewards if successful in the difficult post, such as a ministerial appointment, and President Karzai is reluctant to agree.

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